



Subject	Update on ARB's Operational Activities		
Status	Open Session		
Purpose	For Note		
From	Registrar & Chief Executive		
History	Parent Committee	First Submitted	Revision Number
	N/A	11 February 2016	N/A

1. Purpose

To update the Board on ARB's operational activities since the last Board meeting.

For Note

2. Contribution to the Board's Purpose and Objectives

In delivering the Act, ARB's objectives are:

Protect the users and potential users of architects' services, and support architects through Regulation. ARB's Operational Activities Report keeps the Board informed of activities which ensure that ARB meets its purpose and objectives and delivers against the Business Plan 2016.

3. Key points

Stakeholder Relations

Recent stakeholder relations activity has focused on three areas: i) Asking existing contacts to help raise awareness of the 2016 retention fee deadline; ii) Publicising the election of architect Board Members, including building relationships with new organisations, to encourage a diverse range of candidates to stand for election, and iii) Raising awareness of the vacancies for lay Board Members, recently advertised by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Retention fee messages

Our approach to reminding architects to pay their annual fee was shaped by the feedback we received in 2015, which highlighted the importance of using a range of mediums to reach registrants. In addition to the hard copy retention fee notice, required by the Act, we used email and other notices. For the first time, we trialled a text reminder service which was very successful with 300 payments received in the 60 minutes after the text was sent out. We also launched a calendar reminder tool which was clicked on 800 times.

We were able to ask the contacts we have developed in professional and consumer bodies to inform their audiences about the deadline. Twitter was a particularly popular channel for reminder messages, with architects and members of the press retweeting our messages and posting their own. One of our twitter messages about the retention fee became our most popular tweet in 2016. It was retweeted 11 times (including by the RIBA, journalists and two ARB Board Members). As a result this message alone was seen by nearly 6500 people.

Publicising the election of architect Board Members

Our strategy to raise awareness about the election of architect Board Members has included the development of a bespoke microsite containing all of the key information. We posted a range of social media messages including images and an A-Z of the election.

In addition to this, we sought advice from the RIBA and the Chair of RIBA's Architects for Change group, who advised us on how to reach out to a wide range of groups and networks. Key to our work has been the development of new stakeholder relationships with bodies representing minority groups in the built environment sector, including women and LGBT networks. These contacts have resulted in the following successes: The National Association of Women in Construction posted details about the election on their website and promoted it at their annual conference; other networks for women in construction informed their contacts about the vacancies; ARB's Communication Lead spoke at an Urbanistas event in London; and the Co-Chair of Freehold, a LGBT network in the construction sector, agreed to circulate details to the group's members.

Our messages have focused on the role of those serving on the Boards of public bodies; explained that only registered architects can participate and highlighted the fact that the election is conducted by an independent organisation.

Publicising the vacancies for lay Board Members

Whilst the process of recruiting lay Board Members is managed by DCLG and vacancies are advertised on the Cabinet Office's public appointments website, we were committed to informing our stakeholders about these vacancies. We contacted a number of equality and diversity networks, as well as stakeholder organisations in the consumer and client sector.

Other regulators

We continue to build relationships with other regulators. We had a very informative meeting with the General Medical Council's Assistant Director of Policy, Business Transformation and Safeguarding who talked to us about the GMC's Fitness to Practice process and the steps taken by the GMC to respond to the mental health needs of those going through this process. We heard about a project undertaken by the GMC, to review the tone of its fitness to practice correspondence and are considering undertaking a similar piece of work.

We also continue our involvement in the UK Inter-Professional Group (UKIPG) a forum used by the major Professional and Regulatory Bodies in the United Kingdom to share best practice in the public interest.

Planning Portal

The Planning Portal is an online tool. Many local authorities use it to manage public facing elements of their planning processes. The Portal is operated as a Joint Venture between DCLG and a company called TerraQuest. The Planning Portal team are currently considering offering a 'find an agent' service to enable members of the public to find providers of construction related services, including information about architects. We have submitted a proposal outlining why the Portal should link to the Register of Architects. We have stressed that the Register is a comprehensive list of all UK architects and explained why it is in the public interest to link to a statutory regulator. We expect further discussions to take place with the Planning Portal team in due course.

Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture

We met with representatives of SCHOSA's Council in late January 2016 as part of our regular series of liaison meetings. We discussed topics such as the interpretation of the Qualifications Directive as well as providing SCHOSA members with updates about the status of the Periodic Review and the Board's forthcoming review of its Routes to Registration. These meetings enable us to better understand the issues which are of importance to the Head of Schools as well as allowing us to disseminate useful information to them.

Built Environment Professional Education Project (BEPE)

In early December 2015, we attended an update session and reception to report progress on the Built Environment Professional Education Project, which is a part of the Paralympic Legacy project. The session provided an update on progress made to embed and include inclusive design within the built environment education and competence regimes.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

We are represented on the QAA's Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) Steering Group. This Steering Group is responsible for ensuring that PSRBs are kept up to date regarding relevant developments in Higher Education as well as the QAA's work. The most recent Steering Group meeting looked at the Government's Green Paper on Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice; the development of Subject Benchmark Statements; the QAA's future work and likely direction and agreed the outline for the next United Kingdom Inter-professional Group/QAA's Forum. Membership of this Group is important to the work we carry out and enables us to better understand the Higher Education landscape and the direction in which it is heading. We will also be meeting with the QAA to discuss a future review of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Architecture as well as ARB's review of its routes to registration which is likely to commence later this year.

RIBA

We attended the RIBA's Presidents' Medals award ceremony in December 2015 as well as the Royal Gold Medal Student Crit in February 2016.

Professional Qualifications Directive

The Board is asked to note that the transposition deadline for implementing the revised Professional Qualifications Directive was 18 January 2016. ARB is now operating under the terms of the revised Directive. We have undertaken, and will continue to undertake, checks alongside both the DCLG and BIS to ensure that we are fully compliant with the requirements of the revised Directive. We are working closely however with our Government Departments to ensure that we properly understand the revised requirements, specifically in relation to the notification of compliant qualifications to the European Commission for listing under Annex V, so that any future developments in this area are based on a sound footing.

European Network of Architects Competent Authorities (ENACA)

We have been actively participating in ENACA's work in recent months, primarily assisting with the drafting of guidance notes for authorities dealing with the notification of architecture qualifications to the European Commission. ENACA is also in dialogue with the European Commission about the arrangements for the forthcoming meeting of the Commission's Sub Group which deals with the notification of qualifications for listing under Annex V of the Directive. The next ENACA meeting will be taking place in late February/early

March 2016; we anticipate that discussions will continue to centre around interpreting the revised Qualifications Directive and learning about how each Member State is dealing with the revised requirements within the Directive at an operational level.

Architects Council of Europe (ACE)

We recently attended the ACE's General Assembly meeting; this meeting had been postponed from the end of November 2015 due to the security issues in Brussels at that time. The agenda included updates on ACE's recent work. The meeting also provided invaluable opportunities to network with our counterparts from other Member States, particularly in relation to the ways in which they are interpreting the revised Qualifications Directive.

Students aiming to apply for Prescribed Examination – Westminster short course

We attended one of the University of Westminster's workshop evenings covering preparing for the Prescribed Examination process in late November. We attended so as to ensure that any students with more complicated technical questions on the process are able to receive clear directions. The evening went smoothly, and a number of individuals followed up the session with emails requesting guidance on their own particular circumstances.

Communicating ARB's work

As explained above, communications activity at the end of 2015 focused on informing architects about the retention fee deadline as well as publicising the election of architects and the appointment of lay Board Members.

Ebulletin

The November ebulletin performed well, circulation topped 30,000 for the first time with 30,835 ebulletin's delivered. This is a landmark number and reflects both improvements made during the ebulletin redesign process, which took place at the beginning of 2015, as well as the increase in the number of people joining the statutory Register. The most popular articles covered misuse of title, the regular prescription update and a piece advising architects on how to avoid complaints. As the ebulletin is largely aimed at architects we also took the opportunity to include articles covering the election of architects and the new retention fee text reminder service.

Recent Press Coverage

We issued press releases about the retention fee due date and the removal from the Register process. The architectural press covered the number of architects removed from the Register for non-payment. The coverage was broadly balanced and contained quotes from the Registrar and the Chair, which stressed the regulator's role to maintain an accurate Register in the public interest.

We also posted a press release about the lay Board Member vacancies which were advertised on the Cabinet Office public appointments website; the advert was circulated to our stakeholders in consumer, client and regulatory bodies.

Website

Visits to the website and online Register remained steady towards the end of 2015. No substantial changes have been made to these resources in recent months, although work has been undertaken in preparation for a reorganisation of the exam information webpage to improve navigation for service users. We continue to update our leaflets and information sections as an on-going project. An overhaul of our website is planned and budgeted for during 2016.

Board Paper Feedback

We are aware of the voluminous nature of Board papers, particularly for the first meeting of the year when a number of reports are provided. A balance needs to be struck between providing sufficient information to allow Board members to undertake their duties, yet not swamping readers with statistics and charts. As always, any feedback on the quantity, quality and format of the information provided would be gratefully received.

In line with Board feedback we have not circulated as hard copy the graphs from the Board Effectiveness Review. The graphs can be found on the Board's intranet and published on the Board's website for the public to view them.

4. Administration of the Register

Accuracy of the Register

The Accuracy project is on-going, with staff amending records when accessing the database as well as the use of dedicated time through cross-team working. 43,543 amendments were made by the end of 2015.

Approximately 600 records were updated at the point of reinstating registrants to the Register in the early part of 2016.

Update on Removals from the Register for Non-Payment 2015

2015 Retention Fee Collection

Following the 2015 removals for non-payment, as of 31 December 2015, 1,331 architects of the 1824 removed had been re-entered on the Register (93%). Of the 1824 struck off in 2015, 110 were struck off again in January 2016.

2016 Retention Fee Collection

Despite every effort to alert and encourage payment before the deadline, on 5 January 2016, 1,438 architects were removed for non-payment of the retention fee, compared to 1,824 in 2015, a 21% reduction.

As of 19 January 2016, 619 applications to re-join have been received.

The number of complaints about the deadline of 31 December has reduced significantly.

Comments received on the process, our communications, and our service, feed in to our on-going commitment to improvements in this area.

As we do every year, we have considered a number of cases of extenuating circumstances based on evidence, or administration issues within the organisation, and where appropriate we have waived the application fee or the prescribed fee, or both. To date we have waived 53 fees.

5. Committee Meetings

Audit Committee	-	24 November 2015
Remuneration Committee	-	24 November 2015
Prescription Committee	-	26 November 2015
Professional Conduct Committee	-	2 – 3 December 2015
Professional Conduct Committee	-	7 – 8 December 2015
Professional Conduct Committee	-	12 – 14 January 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	15 January 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	21 January 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	27 January 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	1 February 2016
Investigations Oversight Committee	-	5 February 2016

7. Future Meetings and Events

Prescription Committee	-	25 February 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	26 February 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	1 March 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	2 March 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	7 March 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	14 – 16 March 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	24 March 2016
Audit Committee	-	17 March 2016
Prescription Committee	-	31 March 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	5 April 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	7 April 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	11 - 13 April 2016
Board Induction Day	-	21 April 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	22 April 2016
Prescription Committee	-	23 April 2016
Remuneration Committee	-	5 May 2016
Professional Conduct Committee	-	9 – 11 May 2016

**8. Anticipated dates for future Board reports on particular projects within the Business Plan
May 2016**

Code of Conduct Review
Update on Routes to Registration

9. Risk Implications

ARB's Operational Activities Report provides the Board with an update on business activities, progress against the Business Plan, as well as highlighting any emerging risks which may impact on delivery.

10. Resource Implications

Staff resources continue to be stretched to capacity. We have recently considered the current structure, to ensure resources are positioned where needed, now and in the future.

11. Communication

The update on ARB's operational activities, updates the Board on ARB's work and any risks which may prevent the delivery of ARB's operations.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

ARB takes equality implications into account in all areas of its work and where appropriate, specific impact assessments are undertaken.